

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (Canceled)
2. (Currently Amended) The method of claim ~~4~~19, wherein the piezoelectric film is selected from the group consisting of composed of:
 - a) aluminum nitride; and or
 - b) zinc oxide.
3. (Currently Amended) The method of claim ~~4~~19, wherein the patterned electrode is selected from the group consisting composed of aluminum and or titanium.
4. (Currently Amended) The method of claim ~~4~~19, wherein the substrate is selected from the group consisting composed of silicon and or gallium arsenide.
5. (Canceled)
6. (Currently Amended) The method of claim ~~5~~19, wherein substep (b) is achieved using the step of planarizing includes employing a chemical mechanical polishing process.
7. (Currently Amended) The method of claim ~~5~~19, wherein substep (b) is achieved using the step of planarizing includes employing a polymer planarization process.
8. (Currently Amended) The method of claim ~~5~~19, wherein step (b) is achieved using the step of planarizing includes employing a reflow and lift-off process.

9. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 519, wherein the non-conducting layer has a low dielectric constant.

10. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 519, wherein the non-conducting layer is SiO₂.

11-18 (Canceled)

19. (New) A method of forming a thin film acoustic device, the device including a patterned electrode with an edge and a height, the patterned electrode formed on a substrate and a piezoelectric film to be formed on the patterned electrode, the method comprising the steps of:

depositing a non-conducting layer on the patterned electrode and substrate; and

planarizing the non-conducting layer so that the non-conducting layer has a height that is equal to a height of the patterned electrode.

20. (New) The method of claim 19, further comprising:

forming the piezoelectric film on the patterned electrode and planarized non-conducting layer.

21. (New) The method of claim 19, wherein the piezoelectric film serves as a support membrane for the device.

22. (New) A method of forming a thin film acoustic device, comprising:

forming an electrode on a substrate;

patterning the electrode;

depositing a non-conducting layer on the patterned electrode and substrate;

planarizing the non-conducting layer so that the non-conducting layer and

patterned electrode form a continuous layer having a level surface; and
forming a piezoelectric layer on the level surface of the continuous layer.

23. (New) The method of claim 22, wherein the level surface provided by the planarized non-conducting layer and patterned electrode improves the mechanical integrity of the piezoelectric layer by eliminating the edge of the patterned electrode.

24. (New) A method of improving the mechanical integrity of a piezoelectric film layer during fabrication of a thin film acoustic device, the device including a patterned electrode with an edge at a height, the patterned electrode formed on a substrate and the piezoelectric film layer to be formed on the patterned electrode, the method comprising the steps of:

depositing a non-conducting layer on the patterned electrode and substrate;
and

planarizing the non-conducting layer so that the non-conducting layer and patterned electrode form a continuous layer having a level surface, improving the mechanical integrity of the piezoelectric layer by eliminating the edge of the patterned electrode.